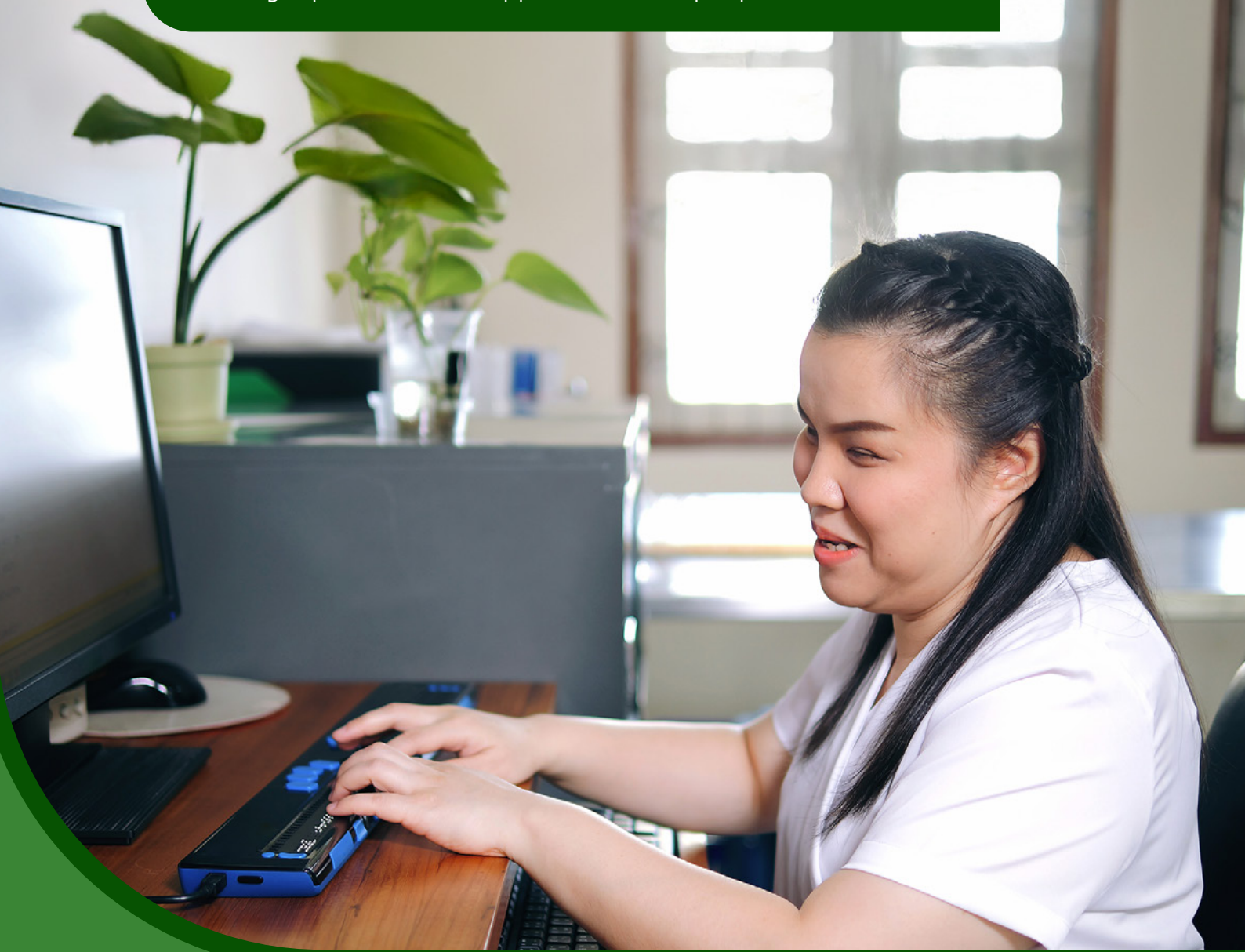


# Accessibility, Inclusion, and Employment Plan Reference Guide

Ensuring equitable career opportunities for people with disabilities



## Introduction

**Implementing an Accessibility, Inclusion and Employment Plan (AIEP) is vital for organisations committed to creating equitable career opportunities for people with disabilities.**

**This guide provides a structured approach to evaluating workplace inclusiveness, identifying areas for growth and co-developing a robust AIEP that aligns with organisational goals. It is designed for organisational leaders, HR professionals and inclusion advocates aiming to foster a more inclusive work environment.**

## So, what is an Accessibility, Inclusion and Employment Plan?

An Accessibility, Inclusion and Employment plan is a strategic framework designed to promote the inclusion, accessibility and career advancement of people with disabilities within an organisation. While we refer to it as an AIEP, these plans may also be known by other names such as a Disability Inclusion Action Plan (DIAP) etc.

The following are examples of some of key business areas you can and should include in your AIEP:

1. Recruitment
2. Workplace Adjustments
3. Disability Awareness
4. Information and Knowledge
5. Learning and Development
6. Employment
7. Accessibility
8. Data
9. Perceptions





# Disability and the Workforce

## Understanding Disability

Overall, the survey tells us that most of our clients are satisfied with our service and would recommend it to others. It also indicates that you have strong feelings of respect and safety, but there are areas needing improvement in our communication and support to help you understand your rights.

People with disabilities include those who have long-term physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory impairments, which, in interaction with various societal barriers, may hinder their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others. This includes people living with mental health conditions or chronic illness.

### Key Statistics:

- **1 in 6** Australians live with a disability
- **53%** of working age people with disabilities are in the labour force, compared to **84%** of those without disabilities
- **42%** of Australians with disabilities are employed compared to **80%** of those without disabilities.

An AIEP should not provide the detail required to work through every individual scenario however, at a higher level it can identify the targets and benchmarks required to make an impact in these areas.

Aligned with clear strategy and governance these targets and benchmarks can support the policy and procedure which will build in opportunities for a greater representation of people with disability in the workplace, and a diverse and inclusive culture.

## Workplace Bias

Biases are a product of our cultural beliefs and experiences. Whether intentional or unintentional, these biases can lead to discrimination or create other negative impacts on individuals or teams. Even through good intentions an individual can engage in ableism; that is, acting or speaking in a way which implies people with disabilities are deficient in some way.

The opportunity for workplace bias to impact on individuals is reduced when we recognise that the social model of disability drives us to provide opportunities which level the playing field for people with disability in the workplace.

# Allyship

Allyship is allowing space for people with disability to speak for themselves and amplifying their voices when needed. An organisation which intends to develop an AIEP must ensure that they are committed to being an ally to people with disabilities. Some examples of Allyship are listed below:

- Never speaking for people with disabilities, but always speaking with them,
- Showing a willingness to act on and implement the needs and wishes of people with disabilities which support their equity and accessibility,
- Contribute to, and promote an environment of co-production, collaboration, and inclusive governance,
- Be consistent and unwavering in our support for, of, and with people with disabilities.

# Measures of Success

There's ongoing debate about whether organisations should set targets for hiring employees with disabilities – with valid arguments on both sides. However, if you're in the early stages of your inclusion process, setting targets can be very beneficial for the following reasons:

- Targets provide clear goals and help ensure an organisation is focused on increasing inclusion
- Creates momentum and motivate teams
- Helps uncover and address obstacles in hiring and career progression
- Boost organisations credibility and appeal as an inclusive employer
- Supports broader efforts to increase employment opportunities

## The Business case for an Accessibility, Inclusion and Employment Plan

Research shows that organisations with inclusive policies see a 20% increase in productivity and a significant reduction in absenteeism. Beyond compliance with legal requirements, inclusivity drives innovation, improves employee engagement and enhances organisational reputation.

While initial implementation may present challenges, the long-term benefits of an inclusive workplace far outweigh these hurdles. Investing in accessibility and inclusion is not only ethically sound but also economically advantageous.

## Building Inclusive Cultural Change in Your Organisation

A shift in workplace culture can take time to embed throughout an organisation. Yet, through education, awareness, co-production, and by ensuring all staff are brought along in any cultural change process it is possible to create a shift towards equity and a values-based organisation.

Intrinsic to workplace cultural change is the consideration of four overarching goals in an AIEP which signal an organisation's intention to shift towards an inclusive, accessible, and diverse culture. These are:

### 1. Practices and Behaviours

An organisation building inclusive practices and behaviours into their AIEP will help embed a universal design approach, will support a cultural shift towards accessibility and diversity, and create a workplace culture based on values and equity.

### 2. Inclusive Language and Communication

Inclusive language and communication goes further than the words we say, encompassing digital, personal, and organisational interactions with individuals and larger groups. A universal design approach underscores the need for equitable participation and communication, and for an organisation to value, respect, embrace, and support the diversity of their workforce.

### 3. Education

Though education is about ensuring staff and teams are equipped with skills and knowledge to make a workplace more equitable, education is also just as much about an organisation listening to and learning from those with the knowledge and lived experience needed to create inclusive workplaces.

### 4. Co-Design Practices

There is an often-repeated quote in the disability community: "Nothing about us, without us". True inclusion evolves from co-production processes which brings in the people being most impacted into the design, delivery, evaluation, and review stages of a project.

## Where To from Here?

Has the above left you with more questions or realised there are large gaps in your organisations current inclusive practices?

We have pulled together the below checklists to assist you in getting started or continue making organisational change.

AIEP Implementation and Target Checklist

Though there is plenty to consider, the first step is to just get started. Once you start these checklists you will uncover a long list of things that may require change in your organisation. This is okay and to be expected, but you need to start somewhere and the rest will follow.

1. AIEP Development and Implementation

These are critical steps to get the ball rolling and avoid hindrances in your AIEP progress. It’s crucial to achieve ‘yes’ on these items.

	No	Yes
Ensure leadership buy in by securing commitment from board and executives		
Allocate a small initial budget and designated team to lead AIEP efforts		
Engage Disability Employee Networks (or create one if none exists) to gather input		
Conduct a basic assessment of organisational readiness, including HR Practices & current data available		
Draft a simple vision that outlines your commitment to inclusion		
Identify and communicate key organisational values		
Plan and provide initial awareness training on disability inclusion for all staff		
Set a simple timeline that allows for learning and adjustments		
Define a few initial targets and identify quick wins		
Set up a basic tracking system to monitor progress and plan reviews		
Establish channels for feedback from all employees and be prepared to act on this feedback		
Implement workplace adjustment processes		

2. Goals, Targets and Benchmarks

These goals, targets and benchmarks will help solidify your early efforts and lay a strong foundation for the long – term success of your AIEP. These steps are for when your organisation has gained some momentum.

	No	Yes
Set targets for upskilling leaders and employers in inclusivity and accessibility		
Enhance employee disability employee networks to support AIEP efforts		
Building external organisational networks to drive sector-wide inclusion		
Overhaul workplace adjustments processes and procedures		
Elevating or create roles focused on Diversity and Inclusion		
Identify and support employees with disabilities to lead education and advocacy		
Provide ongoing training on inclusiveness, accessibility and disability awareness		
Implement comprehensive plans to educate all staff on exclusive workp strategies		
Increasing data and information around the career opportunities for, retention of, and overall number of employees with a disability		
Regularly review and improve accessibility in digital and physical worksp		
Establish relationships with communities and organisations to enhance inclusion knowledge		
Set benchmarks for more accessible and inclusive recruitment processes		
Sharing our learned knowledge around being an inclusive and accessihareble employer with communities and organisations		
Implementing AI technologies in recruitment which target recruitment o people with disabilities		
Implementing targets for increased recruitment and retention of people with disabilities		

## Resources

The following websites will provide further and in-depth information about these processes. They are great resources for furthering your impact and growth in Diversity and Inclusion.

- [Australian Disability Network](#)
- [Diversity Council of Australia](#)
- [JobAccess](#)
- [Employ My Ability](#)
- [Include Ability](#)